

Commissioner Velasquez is an experienced, courageous jurist with integrity. That is why he was hired for the job, and by all indications, he is guilty of nothing more than doing the job he was hired to do. The more he does so, the more those who fear prosecution will try to find ways to stop him. It is therefore very important at this time that the international community, including the United States, reaffirms its support for Velasquez and the fight against corruption and impunity in Guatemala.

It is noteworthy that the former attorney general has consistently voiced her support for Velasquez because, if anyone should know if there is a grain of truth to the allegations against him, it would be her. She knows from experience the motivations of those who are aligned against CICIG because they have also tried to intimidate her.

In order for CICIG and Commissioner Velasquez to effectively carry out CICIG's mandate through the reminder of its current term that ends in September 2019, he needs the support of the Guatemalan Government, the United Nations, the United States, and other governments that support justice in Guatemala. I commend the Department of State and U.S. Ambassador Arreaga for recognizing what is at stake and for seeking ways to ensure that CICIG and Commissioner Velasquez can carry out their responsibilities transparently and effectively. I also know that a majority of Democrats and Republicans respect Commissioner Velasquez and want CICIG to receive the funds it needs. I am confident that the funds will be released, that CICIG and the role of the Commissioner will be enhanced, and that the cause of justice for the Guatemalan people will be served.

NOMINATION OBJECTION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I intend to object to any unanimous consent request relating to the nomination of William R. Evanina, to be Director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center, PN1548.

During the course of the Judiciary Committee's inquiry into how the Justice Department and FBI handled the Clinton and Russia investigations, committee staff have reviewed text messages between Peter Strzok and Lisa Page. In some of the text messages, an individual named "Evanina" is mentioned in the context of government officials having briefed then Vice President-Elect Pence on national security related issues and planning to brief him a second time. The name was redacted from text messages initially provided to Congress.

"Evanina" most likely refers to the nominee who is and was at that time Acting Director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center. The committee needs to more fully understand the meaning of the apparent references to Mr. Evanina in the

Strzok-Page texts and will need to obtain further context from him and the Justice Department in order to do so before I could consent to proceeding to consider his confirmation.

The committee has recently experienced increasing difficulty in obtaining relevant documents and briefings from the Justice Department and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, ODNI. For example, Deputy Attorney General, DAG, Rod Rosenstein personally assured me that the Senate Judiciary Committee would receive equal access to information provided to the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, HPSCI, with regard to any concessions in its negotiations regarding pending subpoenas from that committee. Two weeks ago, the ODNI and the DAG provided a briefing in connection with a pending HPSCI subpoena to which no Senate Judiciary Committee member was invited. Thus far, the committee's attempts to schedule an equivalent briefing have been ignored.

Additionally, beginning November 29, 2017, I made requests for information from the inspector general of the Intelligence Community and ODNI regarding the diffusion of the IC whistleblower program and the highly unusual and problematic termination of the IC IG's former Executive Director for Whistleblowing and Source Protection. In March, having received none of the information I asked for, I formally and publicly objected to the confirmation of the ODNI general counsel nominee. To date, I still have received nothing. Therefore, I also object to Mr. Evanina's confirmation until and unless the ODNI provides a fulsome response to my letters. Additionally, I understand that Mr. Evanina was responsible for developing policies and procedures to address retaliatory security clearance actions pursuant to a statutory directive, but that it is not clear whether such policies and procedures have been implemented. I would like for Mr. Evanina to explain the status of those efforts.

Thus, unfortunately, I must object to any consideration of this nomination. My objection is not intended to question the credentials of Mr. Evanina in any way. However, the executive branch must recognize that it has an ongoing obligation to respond to congressional inquiries in a timely and reasonable manner.

REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to the Republic of Azerbaijan, which celebrated the 100th anniversary of its declaration of independence on May 28.

The United States was one of the first countries to recognize Azerbaijan's independence. The country faced horrific challenges when it was invaded by the Bolsheviks in 1920 and later incorporated into the Soviet Union. With the end of the Cold War

and the demise of the USSR, Azerbaijan once again achieved its independence on August 30, 1991. Our country recognized Azerbaijan's independence that same year and established diplomatic relations with the Republic of Azerbaijan on February 19, 1992.

Azerbaijan is a key security partner of the United States. For example, Azerbaijani troops have served in Afghanistan since 2002 to assist the United States and our partners in NATO. Additionally, the country supports the United States through the Northern Distribution Network, which allows for the transit of nonlethal supplies through Azerbaijan's territory to our forces in Afghanistan and permits the overflight through its airspace of U.S. military personnel heading to Afghanistan.

Azerbaijan also stands as an example of a secular, Muslim-majority country that has excellent relations with its own Jewish community and has maintained diplomatic relations with our strong ally, Israel, for over 25 years.

Through the Southern Gas Corridor, Azerbaijan will provide energy to our allies in Europe, thus lessening the continent's reliance on Russia for gas.

For this and many other reasons, I commend the Republic of Azerbaijan and its people on this significant anniversary.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

BICENTENNIAL OF MADISON, NORTH CAROLINA

• Mr. BURR. Mr. President, today I wish to celebrate with the citizens of Madison, NC, the town's 200 years of rich history. Named for President James Madison, the town was acquired at auction in June 1818.

In Madison's infancy, tobacco was a high-demand commodity and employer in town due to its location on the Dan and Mayor Rivers, which offer fertile soil for cultivation. By the late 1800s, Madison was home to more than 40 tobacco factories, I reported to have been the largest grower of tobacco in the world at that time. In the early 1900s, Madison reaped the benefits of a growth in the textiles industry when Gem Dandy, Inc., opened for business in town. It remains headquartered there today. Madison gained another employer in the mid-1990s when Remington Arms made Madison home to its headquarters.

Today Madison boasts two historic districts and several landmarks listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

I am proud to offer my congratulations to the citizens of Madison, NC on the occasion of their bicentennial. •

REMEMBERING KATE KENNEDY

• Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, today I wish to honor Kate Kennedy, a pioneering and inspiring San Franciscan.